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A Preliminary to Fuller Investigations of Cognitive Mechanisms Underlying the *There*-Amalgam[1]

Isamu Takaki

1. Introduction

One subtype of the *There*-Construction in English—such as *There is a man wants to see you*—is called the *There*-Amalgam. Foci of previous studies on this construction have been morphological, syntactic, and semantic/functional aspects (Ando (2005, 2008), Curme (1931), Harris & Vincent (1980), Jespersen (1927/1949), Lambrecht (1988), Prince (1981), Quirk et al. (1985), Takaki (2008, 2009c, 2010a, 2010c), Yaguchi (2007, 2008), Yasui (1987), a.o.), whereas cognitive processes producing this anacoluthia phenomenon have gained no attention thus far. In this article, I will briefly consider the slighted cognitive factors of the *There*-Amalgam and provide a springboard for more elaborate research of this facet in the future, hoping eventually to achieve fuller elucidation of this construction.

2. Target Phenomenon

The phenomenon tackled in this paper as in (1) is called the *There*-Amalgam (henceforth, TA for short):[2]

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[1] This article is based on Takaki's (2009b) poster presentation at ELSJ 2nd International Spring Forum 2009 held at Nara Women's University (April 2009). This presentation, in turn, was a modestly revised excerpt (Chapter 6.1) from Takaki's (2009a) unpublished master's thesis.

[2] The term "*There*-Amalgam" is used by Takaki (2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). In fact, there are many other terms

(1) a. There is a man at the door φ wants to see you.
(Curme1931: 236)

b. There aren't many people φ say that nowadays.
(BNC)

c. There was a farmer φ had a dog.
(Lambrecht 1988: 319)

All the above sentences are "anacoluthons" in that they lack the relative pronoun *who* in the φ position where it should ideally appear under the rule set down by prescriptive grammar.

Takaki (2010a: §4, 2010c: §5) hypothesizes that there are some subtypes of the TA, and the construction exists as an "amalgam-particle continuum." The subtypes are the "Run-On" type, the "EVENT-Subject" type, and the "Particle" type, and the latter two (the EVENT-Subject type, in chief) are the targets in this article.[3]

Very roughly, in the EVENT-Subject type of TA, *the logical subject-slot is occupied by a clause*, not a noun phrase (compare Figure 1 with Figure 2), as its name indicates. The function of this type is *to introduce a*

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for the same construction such as "contamination" and "blending" (Ando 2008: 183), "paratactic clause" (Curme 1931: 236), "contact-clause" (Jespersen 1927/1949: 132), and "annex clause" (Quirk et al. 1985: 1407). However, actually, these terms are not always used in exactly the same sense. Be that as it may, I have chosen to adopt Takaki's term.

[3] The reason that I do not include the Run-On type in the scope of the present paper is that this type cannot be regarded as the TA in the "truest" sense. As Takaki (2009a, 2010a) argues, the Run-On type is produced by a rather general motivation "compactness," which is related to every kind of anacoluthia phenomena. That is, this type of TA is not stored in our memory as a construction. For more detail on this matter, see Takaki (2009a: §5.1.1, 2010a: §4.1).

clause, not a noun phrase, as new information.

With regard to the Particle type, Takaki (2009a: §5.1.3, 2010a: §4.3) posits that *there be* in this type acts as some kind of *adverb*, hence the structure of [ADVERB +CLAUSE] (See Figure 3). The function of this type is *to attract hearers' attention* (and even *to express speakers'*

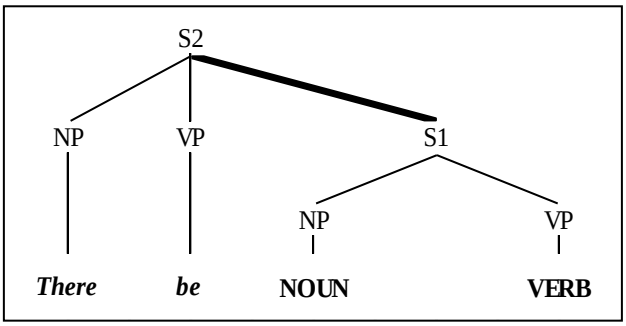

Figure 1. The EVENT-Subject Type
(Takaki 2009a: 45, 2010a: §4.2)

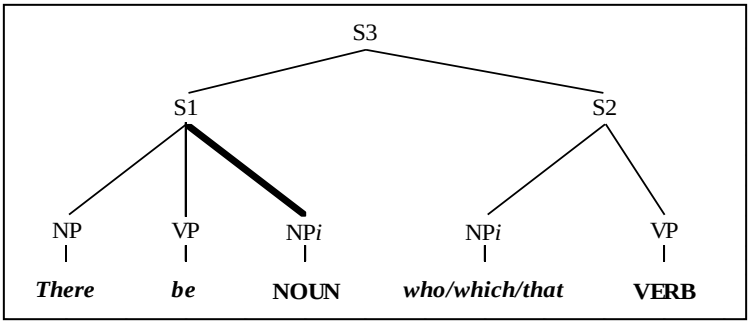

Figure 2. The "Normal" *There*-Construction
with a Relative Clause

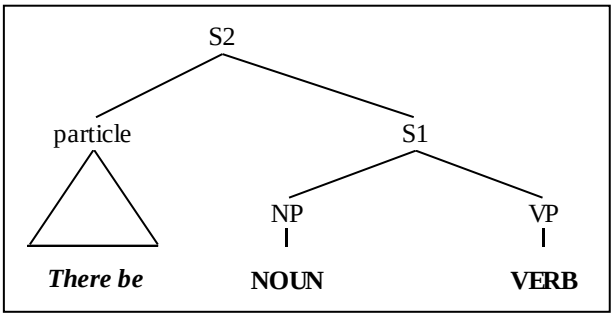

Figure 3. The Particle Type
(Takaki 2009a: 50, 2010a: §4.3)

emotions).

Here, I do not extend any more syntactic and semantic/functional discussions of the TA, but just declare again that the cognitive mechanisms explored in the present paper concern those underlying these two types.

3. Some Revealing Facts Concerning Cognitive Mechanisms Related to the *There*-Amalgam

In this section, I will briefly observe some facts on the TA, which may eventually lead to illuminate some cognitive processes generating the TA. Here, the construction is analyzed in terms of "elaboration of events" and "integration of events."

3.1. Elaboration of Events

First, I will discuss "elaboration of events." The notion of the degree of elaboration of events is also known as "granularity" (Croft & Cruse (2004: 52), Kemmer (2003: 112), Langacker (2008: 55)) [4], which is defined and described as follows:

(2) a. "The degree of precision with which a scene is viewed or conceived..."

(Radden & Dirven 2007: 23)

b. "The degree to which the components of an event structure, whether participants or events/ subevents, are conceptually distinguished into more fine-grained components..."

[4] This notion is called "specificity" (Langacker (2008: 55), Radden & Dirven (2007: 23)) and "resolution" (Langacker 2008: 55) as well.

(Kemmer 2003: 110)

c. "Elaboration of events is a specifically attentional phenomenon, relating to the possibility for viewing situations at different levels of detail ... dependent on relevant communicative and contextual factors."

(Kemmer 2003: 112)

With this notion, in each pair of the examples below, (a)-examples are analyzed as more fine-grained than (b)-examples.

(3) In terms of dimension

a. She ran <u>through</u> the field.[5] [3-dimensional volume]

b. She ran <u>across</u> the field. [2-dimensional surface]

(Croft & Cruse 2004: 52)

(4) In terms of specificity

a. <u>The Ferrari 612</u> was driven by a drunk driver.

[more specific]

b. <u>Several vehicles</u> collided on High Street...

[more general]

(Radden & Dirven 2007: 23)

(5) In terms of event-distinguishability

a. <u>Alice and Ted</u> kissed <u>each other</u>.

[two separable subevents]

b. <u>Alice and Ted</u> kissed.

[5] Throughout the paper, the underlines in the example sentences are my own.

[single undifferentiated event]
(Kemmer 2003: 108-109)

Examples (3a-b) could describe the same scene, but (3a) invites the hearer to attend to the thickness of the vegetation in the field by using *through* requiring a 3-dimensional volume; (3b) instead construes the field as a 2-dimensional surface without thickness (Croft & Cruse 2004: 52). In the examples under (4), cars are referred to by means of the most general term *vehicle* in (4b), and the more specific term *Ferrari 612* in (4a). Examples (5a-b) could also describe the same event, but hearers may feel that there are "two separable subevents" taking place in (5a), while in (5b), the event is a relatively "undifferentiated whole" (Kemmer 2003: 109).

Here, let us analyze the following pair in terms of granularity.

(6) a. We were surprised that <u>they completely destroyed the party</u>.
b. We were surprised at <u>their complete destruction of the party</u>. (Self-constructed examples)

(7)

a.	they	completely	destroy	–ed	φ1	the party
b.	their	complete	destruction	φ2	of	the party

In (7a), there is no lexical correspondent (φ1) to *of* in (7b), but the relation between *destroy* and *the party* is syntactically marked in (7a). That is, the word order

(that *the party* follows *destroy*) signals that *the party* is the object of *destroy*. Thus, in this respect, there is no difference between the two sentences. However, they differ in tense-marking; (7b) lacks tense (φ2), and it depends on the main clause (*We were surprised*) for tense-marking. In other words, (7b) alone does not convey any information about tense, which (7a) does. In this respect, (7a) is more fine-grained than (7b).

More generally, in the case where an event can be described either by a noun phrase ((a) in Figure 4) or by a clause ((b) in Figure 4), the latter is a fine-grained expression than the former in terms of tense.

Now, let us apply this notion of granularity to our construction. Take care to observe (8).

(8) a. There's <u>a call to me from a man</u> every day.
b. There's <u>a man calls me</u> every day.
(Self-constructed examples)

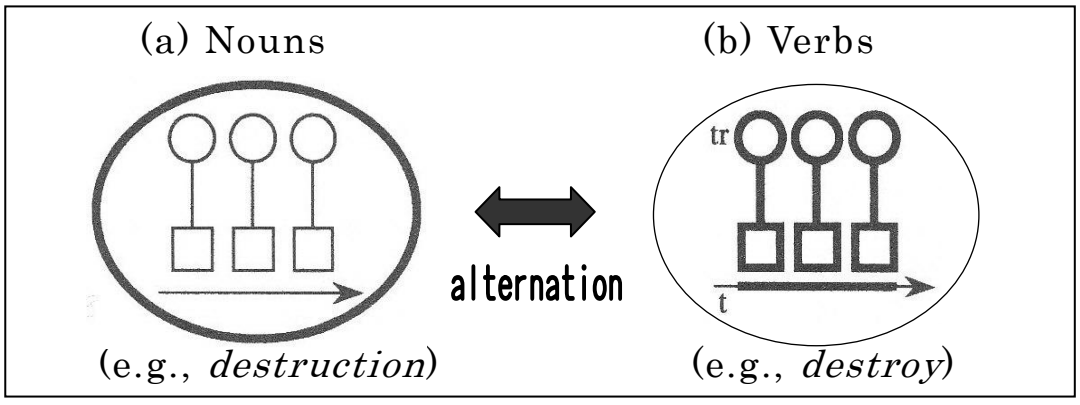

Figure 4. THING-EVENT Alternation[6]
(Cf. Langacker (1991: 24, 1991/2002[2]: 99, 2008: 119))

[6] Langacker terms the cognitive operation of treating an event as some kind of thing, "conceptual reification" (1991: 22, 1991/2002[2]: 98, 2008: 119) and "episodic nominalization" (1991: 24, 363).

As already mentioned in Section 2, a "Normal" *There*-Construction (henceforth, NTC for short) and one subtype of TA (i.e., EVENT-Subject type) differ in that in the former, the subject-slot is occupied by a noun phrase, whereas in the latter, by a clause. Figures 5 and 6 help to capture this image. In Figure 5, the smaller heavy-lined rectangle (MAN CALL ME as a *static* event or a "reified" event by Langacker's term (i.e., a thing)) is the logical subject of (8a), whereas in Figure 6, any heavy line in the smaller rectangle (MAN CALL ME as a *dynamic* event) represents the logical subject of (8b). Thus, assuming that (8a) and (8b) describe the same scene, a TA (= (8b)) is more fine-grained than an NTC (= (8a)) in terms of tense.

What is being presented here is only a "fact," and I will discuss its implications in Section 4.

3.2. Integration of Events

As a second fact, "integration of events" is

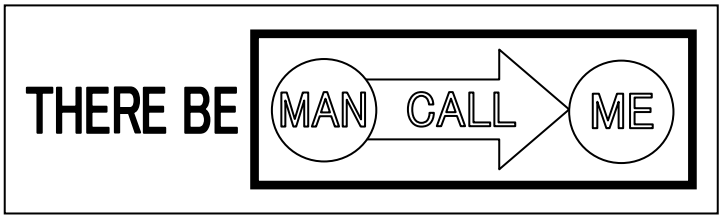

Figure 5. Logical Subject of a NTC
(*There's a call to me from a man every day* (= (8a)))

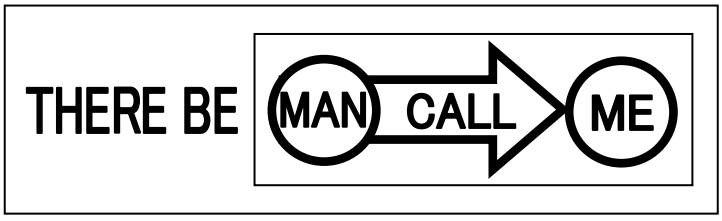

Figure 6. Logical Subject of a TA
(*There's a man calls me every day* (= (8b)))

spotlighted and discussed in this section. Before proceeding further, I first introduce the notion of "iconicity," as a preliminary for the main subject here. Iconicity is assumed to be one of the main motivating factors of language, and it refers to:

(9) "the similarity between conceived reality and language structure." (Radden & Dirven 2007: 53)

This notion is often associated with the so-called onomatopoeic words such as *cuckoo* and *crack*, whose sound shapes are suggestive of their meanings. Iconicity has, however, a much wider application in the area of grammar than in the lexicon. For example, the iconic principle of sequential order says that "the temporal order of events in the conceived world is mirrored in the order of clauses describing them" (Radden & Dirven 2007: 53). A classic illustration of this principle is Caesar's famous exclamation *Veni, vidi, vici* "I came, I saw, I conquered." The chronological order of these three events is iconically reflected in the order in which they are uttered or written.

Another iconic principle concerns proximity/distance, which Haiman (1983: 782-783) explains as follows:

(10) a. The linguistic distance between expressions corresponds to the conceptual distance between them.
b. The linguistic separateness of an expression corresponds to the conceptual independence of the object or event which it represents.

c. The social distance between interlocutors corresponds to the length of the message, referential content being equal.

This principle accounts for the difference in meaning between the phrases *his third unfinished book* "the third of his three unfinished books" and *his unfinished third book* "the third of his book which is unfinished" (Radden & Dirven 2007: 53). In each case, the syntactic distance between the past participle and the noun reflects the conceptual distance between their conceptual units. In complex sentences, this principle accounts for the degree of grammatical integration of the sentences or clauses. Let us observe the example below:

(11) a. I saw the burglar. He ran away. [Juxtaposition]
b. I saw the burglar and he ran away. [Coordination]
c. I saw the burglar as he ran away. [Subordination]
d. I saw the burglar run away. [Complementation]
(Radden & Dirven 2007: 54-56)

Example (11) shows many gradations in how loosely or tightly two situations ("my seeing" and "the burglar's running away") are integrated. The two situations/ sentences in (11a) are so loosely linked to each other that they may be interpreted in some ways: "I noticed the burglar and, because of being detected by me, he ran away" or "I saw the burglar but he ran away." After all, this ambiguity in meaning results from conceptual and linguistic distance in (11a). Compared to this, the

conceptual link between the two situations in (11b) is slightly stronger. An indication of the stronger link can be seen in the more restricted range of meaning associated with this construal, thanks to *and*. The meaning of (11c) is even more restricted than that of (11a-b). The tightest conceptual link between clauses is established by complementation, (11d). Here, the times of the burglar's running away and my seeing this coincide. The burglar's running away is understood as the object of my observation and no longer as an event of its own. According to the principle of proximity, "the tightly integrated events of the burglar's running away and my seeing this should motivate the tight grammatical integration of the clauses" (Radden & Dirven 2007: 56). More importantly, in (11d), the complement clause is the direct object of *saw*, and hence, part of the grammatical "nucleus" of the main clause, and it lacks tense. In other words, this indicates the *dependent* status of the event "the burglar's running away."

Now, let us apply this notion to analyzing the TA.

(12) a. There's <u>a call to me from a man</u> every day.
b. There's <u>a man calls me</u> every day.
((8) recited)

The underlined part in (12a) does not have a tense, and thus, it is not independent: *a call (to me from a man)* is truly part of the *There*-Construction (i.e., the argument of the sentence), namely, tightly integrated. In (12b), on the other hand, the underlined part, *a man calls me*, has a

tense, and thus, it is an "independent" clause. This means that this clause and *There's* are loosely integrated.

The loose integration of *there be* with the following clause in the TA is evidenced by the findings in Takaki (2008, 2009a: Ch.4, 2010c). He conducts a corpus-based description of the TA, and presents some idiosyncrasies of the construction:

(13) a. A *be*-verb and the following noun in TAs discord in number more frequently than in NTCs (e.g., ...*there's more women drive now*...).
b. More definite nouns occur as a logical subject in TAs than in NTCs (e.g., ... *I'm just saying there was mine was Tech*...).
c. The case of personal pronominal subjects in TAs is almost always the nominative, not the accusative (e.g., *There's they got there*.).

All these facts clearly and strongly signal that *there be* in TAs has weak ties with the following noun. Thus, this is just the same as stating that *there be* is loosely integrated with the following clause containing the noun.

This is the second revealing fact on the TA, feasibly leading us to the elucidation of some cognitive mechanisms related to the construction.

4. Implications

In the last section, we observed two enlightening facts on the TA:

(14) a. A TA (to be precise, its logical subject) is more fine-grained in terms of tense than an NTC.
b. In a TA, *there be* is more loosely integrated with the following element (a tensed clause, in this case) than in an NTC (a tense-less noun phrase, in this case).

In general, "more fine-grained expressions" may reflect *speakers' wish to describe some part of an event more elaborately*. When speakers cognize and encode an event, they direct some special attention to some part of it. Such cognitive operation, this time, leads to an anacoluthon, the *There*-Amalgam. Take (15) for example.

(15) a. There's a call to me from a man every day.
b. There's a man calls me every day.

((8) recited)

The speaker of (15b) wishes to describe the event in front of her/him *as in detail as possible*, or to convey what s/he has in mind *as what it is* to the hearer. To use a tensed verb (or a clause) may count as one way to convey *vividness*, *dynamism*, and *precision*. When the speaker is concerned with such effects or construes an event in such a way of elaboration, s/he intentionally uses a TA sentence.

This analysis is compatible with Takaki's (2009a, 2010a) claim. As we have already seen, he advances a hypothesis that the EVENT-Subject type functions as a "clause-as-'new' introducer," and the Particle type, as an "attention attractor" to make addressees prepared for new

information. That is, what a speaker concerns and what s/he wishes to convey as new information to the hearer is *a dynamic event as a whole*. Thus, s/he encodes the event in a dynamic and vivid way (i.e., with a tensed verb) and presents it with the new-information-introducing device (i.e., the *There*-Construction), which at last results in an "ungrammatical" *There*-Construction.

In this way, TA users' concern lies in the "second" clause (a dynamic event), leading to the conceptual and grammatical independence of this clause, namely, the loose integration of the clause with preceding *there be*. After all, the two detected facts in (14) are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are closely related to each other.

5. Concluding Remarks

Langacker (2008: 540) states "... grammar reflects an essential feature of human cognition," and in the same belief, in this paper, I observed the grammatical features of the *There*-Amalgam so as to reach some cognitive mechanisms underlying the construction.

It has been found that behind the use of a *There*-Amalgam lies the speaker's intention to give vividness, dynamism, and precision to the sentence, at the price of grammaticality of the sentence.

However, my hypothesis, that the speaker's interest in a dynamic event leads to the use of a tensed verb, "overgenerates" such sentences as (16b):

(16) a. <u>His arrival</u> surprised me.
b. * <u>He (had) arrived</u> surprised me.

It can be said from this fact that the use of a tensed verb in an "ungrammatical" way is *not always* possible.[7] Thus, we need to ascertain what kind of environment allows this type of anacoluthon.

Clearly enough, the outcome of the present paper is far from the full elucidation of cognitive processes lying behind the *There*-Amalgam. However, it is also true that this paper has provided something worthy of attentive and grave consideration. I hope that the findings in this paper will be a springboard for a more exhaustive research in cognitive mechanisms underlying the *There*-Amalgam, eventually leading to a more complete understanding of the construction.

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[7] This respect is pointed out and the sentences in (16) are given by the anonymous reviewer of an earlier version of the present paper for ELSJ 2nd International Spring Forum 2009.

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